

## **SCDE ESEA Flexibility Waiver**

# **Principle 1: College & Career Ready Expectations**

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **1. What are the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)?**

The CCSS Initiative is a set of educational standards for English language arts and mathematics that states voluntarily adopt. South Carolina state law requires the State Board of Education and the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee to adopt educational standards for use in South Carolina public schools. For more information about the Common Core Standards, please visit <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/programs-services/190/>.

### **2. When were the Common Core Standards adopted?**

The State Board of Education and the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee adopted the standards in July 2010.

### **3. How many states have adopted the Common Core?**

Forty-five states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity have adopted the Common Core.

### **4. What public entities adopt standards?**

The State Board of Education and the Education Oversight Committee are responsible for approving state standards. Both entities will continue to approve standards for other content areas, barring any changes in governance enacted by constitutional amendment or legislation.

### **5. Do the Common Core Standards mandate a certain curriculum?**

No. Local teachers, principals, superintendents, and others will decide how the standards are to be met. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their

classrooms. Local teachers, principals, superintendents, and school boards will continue to make decisions about curriculum and how their school systems are operated.

**6. When will the Common Core Standards be implemented?**

The Common Core Standards will be implemented statewide beginning with school year 2014 – 2015. The South Carolina Department of Education is helping school districts transition to the new standards by providing professional development and training to teachers, principals, and instructional leaders.

**7. Will the End-of-Course exam or HSAP still exist after the Common Core Standards are implemented?**

End-of-Course exams and HSAP are required by state law. It would require an act of the General Assembly to change these requirements.

**8. Will the Common Core Standards test only be on English and math and not science or social studies?**

Yes, the Common Core Standards only test English, math, and writing skills. They do not include science and social studies.

**9. Will there be a new test for students using the Common Core Standards?**

Yes. The current statewide assessment, PASS, will no longer be used in three subject areas: English, math, and writing, and a new assessment will be used in those areas.

**10. What happens to science and social studies PASS tests?**

The Common Core Standards do not affect science or social studies. Social studies standards were most recently adopted in 2011. New, state-developed science standards were approved by the State Board of Education in January 2014 and are currently under review by the Education Oversight Committee. Schools will continue to administer PASS science and PASS social studies assessments unless another assessment is adopted.

**11. What will happen to state test scores once the Common Core Standards are implemented?**

It is unknown what will happen to assessment results. Kentucky tested students in school year 2011-2012 using the Common Core Standards, and results were significantly lower than previous years.

**12. What grades will be tested under Common Core?**

The Smarter Balanced consortium, the group developing the test the State Board of Education has adopted, states that their tests will be for students in grades 3-8 and 11th grade. They are developing other tests for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade that will be optional for states to use.

**13. Will students be required to use computers to take the Common Core assessments?**

Yes. The SCDE has begun working with district personnel to address technology requirements for when the tests are implemented.

**14. How will the new assessment differ from PASS?**

The Smarter Balanced assessment will be a computer adaptive test, meaning that based on student responses, the computer program adjusts the difficulty of questions throughout the assessment. While PASS only measures if a student has met grade-level, it cannot measure whether or not a student is exceeding grade-level standards. The Smarter Balanced assessment will be able to measure beyond a specified grade-level.

**15. What does South Carolina's implementation timeline for Common Core look like?**

2012-13: Transition Year

2013-14: Bridge Year (CCSS will be used for instructional purposes during this school year.)

2014-15: Full Implementation

**16. Will CCSS be used for school report card ratings?**

Yes. Like the PASS assessments, the new assessment will be part of the state report card ratings.

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## **Principle 2: State-Developed Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support**

### **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**1. Do “Priority” or “Focus” schools receive financial assistance to send their teachers to conferences like “reward” schools?**

No, currently “Priority” and “Focus” schools do not receive financial assistance specifically for conferences. However, funding related to “Challenge to Achieve” plans associated with “Priority” and “Focus” schools may be used for professional development with sufficient detail description to demonstrate how the funds will contribute to increasing the ESEA Federal Accountability Rating overall composite index for “Priority” schools or contribute to closing the achievement gaps for identified subgroups for “Focus” schools.

**2. Where is the accountability for results in terms of student achievement in “Priority” and “Focus” schools?**

The accountability for results will be multifaceted. Districts and schools will be held accountable by providing “Challenge to Achieve” plans for “Priority” and “Focus” schools to define activities based on needs assessments, scientifically-based research, and best practices to address the areas that resulted in the school being identified. The state will provide additional professional development and technical assistance to these identified schools. On-site reviews will also be conducted to evaluate the implementation of these activities.

**3. As a teacher I receive no data from End-of-Course exams except for student scores, how can I improve my instruction when I’m unaware of the areas where my students perform poorly?**

Districts and schools will need to coordinate with teaching staff to use aggregate ESEA Accountability Rating data and achievement gap data provided by state assessments. Student diagnostic testing data at the school

level may be used to further isolate areas in need of improvement that should specifically correlate to the curriculum and state assessments.

**4. What was the distribution of grades on the ESEA report cards for this year (2013)?**

Of all schools assessed:

391 schools made an overall grade of “A”

297 schools made an overall grade of “B”

138 schools made an overall grade of “C”

101 schools made an overall grade of “D”

160 schools made an overall grade of “F”

An excel spreadsheet of this data can be found at

<http://ed.sc.gov/data/esea/2013/index.cfm> on the right sidebar under the “Summary” heading.

**5. Why are there some subgroups missing from my school’s report card?**

If a school reported a subgroup with less than 30 students, that group was not included on the report card. Groups with small numbers can sometimes skew the results.

**6. How are “Priority” and “Focus” schools identified?**

“Priority” schools are determined by ranking the total weighted composite index score for Title I schools from highest to lowest. The Title I schools with the lowest composite index scores were identified as “Priority” schools. At least five percent of the total Title I schools served were required to be identified.

The listing of identified “Priority” schools may be found at

[http://ed.sc.gov/data/esea/2013/docs/Priority\\_Schools.pdf](http://ed.sc.gov/data/esea/2013/docs/Priority_Schools.pdf)

“Focus” schools are determined by identifying the Title I schools with the largest overall achievement gaps in subgroup performance or low achievement subgroups; or with the largest gaps in graduation rates or low graduation rates (less than 60%) at the high school level. The number of “Focus” schools must constitute at least ten percent of the total Title I schools in the State.

A listing of identified “Focus” schools may be found at [http://ed.sc.gov/data/esea/2013/docs/Focus\\_Schools.pdf](http://ed.sc.gov/data/esea/2013/docs/Focus_Schools.pdf)

**7. Can a school be identified as both a “Priority” school and a “Focus” school?**

No, a school will not be classified as both a “Priority” school and a “Focus” school. If they meet the criteria for both, the school will be identified as a “Priority” school as that is the most pressing of the categories.

**8. AYP used stair steps which made it difficult for schools to be rated well, however, under the score benchmarks set under this plan, doesn’t the waiver do the same thing? How can you distinguish between the two?**

The United States Department of Education (USED) has been very clear that the Waiver process will continue to demand high levels of accountability for all students. The approved targets were reached in close consultation with the USED. The expectations espoused in No Child Left Behind have not been diminished. The distinguishing characteristic of the Waiver methodology is that there is no longer an “all or nothing” determination for having met the benchmarks. Schools and districts can receive partial credit for making progress and approaching benchmarks and are able to be judged on an A – F scale as opposed to simply “pass” or “fail.”

**9. Is there a plan to test all students in grades 3-8 in science and social studies each year?**

At this time, there is not a plan to test students in science and social studies every year. Our plan does not recommend increasing statewide, mandated testing.

**10. Have you surveyed our parents, teachers, and school communities about the letter grades that our schools received this year?**

No formal survey has been conducted, but the feedback the SCDE has received has been generally positive. In one community, the results generated enough concern that a community forum was held to figure out how those outside the school could best support efforts to improve results. Several districts did ask for their results to be reviewed for possible inaccuracies, and the SCDE complied with those requests.

**11. My school received an overall grade of an “A” or “B” but was identified as a “Focus” school. How can my school be identified as a “Focus” school with such a high overall grade score?**

Composite index scores and overall grades were not part of the determination of “Focus” schools. The intent of identifying “Focus” schools is to identify schools that had achievement gaps in historically underserved populations. Even if a school received an “A” or “B” overall grade score, achievement gaps may be apparent for at-risk students. Identifying these schools allows additional resources to be targeted to assist these schools and reduce the potential for achievement gaps amongst student subgroups.

**12. On the report card, what grades count as meeting the state’s expectations?**

Any school rated an A, B, or C meets the state’s expectations. On every report card page, we include the following definitions:

90–100 (A): Performance substantially exceeds the state’s expectations.

80–89 (B): Performance exceeds the state’s expectations.

70–79 (C): Performance meets the state’s expectations.

60–69 (D): Performance does not meet the state’s expectations.

Below 60 (F): Performance is substantially below the state’s expectations.

**13. What is the difference between South Carolina’s state report cards and the federal report cards issued under the ESEA waiver?**

The state report card process is governed by the Education Oversight Committee. We can’t use this same process for our federal accountability results as the state report cards do not reflect subgroup performance data. The Department would like to work towards one, unified system of reporting.

**14. What happens to the federal report cards if ESEA is re-authorized by Congress?**

Depending on the requirements included in a potential re-authorization, we could be allowed to continue with the system we have in place, conform to a nation-wide system like AYP, or be required to make tweaks to our current system to meet new requirements.

# **SCDE ESEA Flexibility Waiver**

## **Principle 3: Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership**

### **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**1. Will teacher ratings be posted for the public to view?**

No, there is no plan of a teacher evaluation to be posted for public viewing.

**2. If teachers are labeled “A, B, or C” don’t you think this system will cause teachers to leave the state or deter teachers from outside SC from joining our teacher workforce?**

We have considered stakeholder input and will not use a rating system based on letter grades. Instead, we propose using a five-level rating system that will accurately reflect the educator's effectiveness in the classroom. This system can be used constructively to assist teachers.

**3. How reliable and valid will the teacher evaluations be?**

We recognize that there has been a lot of concern about the reliability and validity of the proposed evaluation system, which is why we are thoroughly testing the system years before the proposed implementation. It is not our intent to produce a system that unfairly penalizes anyone. We are aware that some past studies have produced questionable results when it comes to value-added data. However, we are not using the same tools and calculations as those studies. The company (SAS) developing the value-added component gave a very informative presentation to the State Board of Education in October 2012. We encourage everyone to watch the video, located at

<http://ed.sc.gov/agency/stateboard/video/index.cfm?ID=RI8A1N92978>, beginning at 1:45:00. The PDF presented by SAS can be found at [http://ed.sc.gov/agency/lpa/documents/SBE-SASPresentation\\_10-10-12-final.pdf](http://ed.sc.gov/agency/lpa/documents/SBE-SASPresentation_10-10-12-final.pdf).

**4. How will the proposed system calibrate a teacher’s contribution for students who change schools in December or February?**



The value-added data component allows us to input a percentage of the year that reflects the amount of time a teacher was responsible for a certain student. The weight with which the student test scores would factor into a teacher's value-added piece of his or her evaluation would reflect the amount of time the student had been with the teacher.

**5. How do you hold a teacher accountable for students who arrive in his/her classroom in March and are tested in April?**

The value-added piece adjusts the weights of student test scores based on how long they have been with that teacher (see above). When the matches are made between students and teachers through the value-added piece, it ensures they are accurately linked for the student.

**6. What about lack of student growth due to lack of parent accountability?**

We certainly don't discount the importance of parental support in education. In fact, research indicates that the teacher is the most important factor after the home environment. However, lack of parental involvement does not cause poor student achievement or growth. No matter at what level of achievement a student begins, they should be expected to make progress during the school year.

**7. Isn't it difficult to hold individual teachers accountable for reading growth when students participate in remedial programs, tutoring, and enhance their reading skills in other classes? How can you justify holding teachers accountable for student performance in reading under this scenario?**

This is one of the main arguments in favor of having some component of evaluations be based on a school wide value-added score. We recognize that many teachers, from music teachers to social studies teachers, do influence student growth in both ELA and mathematics. While the primary ELA and mathematics teachers may have the greatest influence, there are ways for teachers in charge of other instructional areas to support learning those skills.

**8. As a teacher that teaches a subject that isn't tested, how is it fair to base 30% of my evaluation on kids I have no contact with?**

The idea of a school value-added data component was a fairly common feature in Race to the Top applications. Our desire is to create an environment where everyone in the school is focused on improving growth in the tested subject areas as well as in other subject areas. We believe that all members of the school community have a role to play in that and that one way to formalize and incentivize would be through the evaluation process. We recognize that we will have to carefully consider what would be an appropriate weighting and whether or not to ultimately include school value-add in SC's teacher evaluation system. The intent is to cultivate a community of learning where all teachers recognize that they play a role in everything from the school's math performance to its graduation rate, as well as a whole host of other areas where school performance as a whole matters.

**9. Who served on the Educator Evaluation Stakeholder Committee?**

In June 2012, A Statewide Educator Evaluation Stakeholder Committee (EESC) was formed that included teachers, school principals, district office administrators, and representatives from higher education and other community-based stakeholder groups. This committee was charged with advising South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) staff on the design, validation, and implementation of the updated educator evaluation guidelines for the State. To date, the EESC has convened three times (June 18, 2012, October 14, 2013, and December 6, 2013) to review and provide feedback on the educator evaluation and support guidelines, as well as individual components of the proposed educator evaluation system.

**10. How will the proposed system affect teacher salaries?**

Nothing in the plan affects teachers' salaries. This proposal has nothing to do with merit pay and does not propose lowering teacher salaries.

**11. What is the ultimate effect to teachers at schools with students who do not show expected growth? Is there a training component or does the plan propose dismissal/loss of certification?**

What we are developing would be part of a system of professional development wherein we take the information on teacher performance and tie that to individualized professional development coming from the school, district, or state. When a teacher does not perform well, the system will pinpoint what areas of weakness need to be strengthened. If after continued

effort, there is no improvement, eventually personnel decisions would be made. Those would stay at the local level, which is the current process. The goal is for the evaluation system to provide useful information for informed decisions.

**12. What will this program cost the taxpayers of South Carolina?**

Since the proposed evaluation system would be replacing the current systems (PADEPP and ADEPT) and the funds from those programs would be repurposed, the Department does not intend to request any additional funds from the legislature to fund the new educator evaluation system.

**13. Will this plan penalize those teaching students with profound disabilities?**

The educator evaluation system is designed to be fair and equitable for all teachers, regardless of student population. The system consists of two measures: teacher performance and student growth. Teacher performance will be calculated through the use of a new educator observation rubric that will be used with all classroom-based teachers. The rubric contains four Performance Standards (PS): 1) Planning, 2) Instruction, 3) Environment, and 4) Professionalism, which are aligned with the 2011 InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards. These domains increase the utility of the standards by making them fewer, deeper, and clearer, and ensure the PSs are aligned with College and Career-Readiness Standards.

Student growth will be calculated in one of two ways: Value-Added scores based on State-administered tests or Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) based on locally determined learning goals. Teachers who teach subjects and grades which have State-level assessments will receive “Classroom Value-Added (CVA)” scores. Within CVA, we do not propose expanding testing to students who are not currently tested. For students who are tested, the model we are considering is able to measure student growth across the spectrum of special needs students and takes into account a student’s current level of proficiency. Teachers of students with disabilities who do receive CVA scores will be provided with a fair, valid, and reliable measure of student progress. CVA measures are fair because they take into account student demographic characteristics; a student’s expected growth is based on their past performance and existing proficiency level. CVA scores are valid

and reliable because they account for inherent challenges in student testing such as missing data and measurement error.

Teachers in non-testing grades will not have CVA scores. Instead, these teachers will have SLOs. An SLO is an academic goal the educator sets for his/her students at the start of a course. It represents the growth in learning an educator expects to see over the course of one academic year. The goals must be specific and measurable, based on available prior student learning data. If prior student learning data is unavailable, the educator can administer a pre-assessment to gauge student knowledge. Student learning data may come from a variety of sources such as common assessments (i.e., classroom and benchmark assessments) and/or a student's prior academic history. Educators' scores are based upon the degree to which the goals were attained, as evidenced by student academic performance at the end of the course. This end-of-course-performance can be captured in a variety of ways, such as through performance tasks, extended essay responses, and/or other authentic application of skills.

**14. If this plan is truly in draft status, why did you roll it out in beta schools before having stakeholder meetings? It seems that the meetings were only scheduled after word got out.**

During the initial ESEA waiver process, the SCDE held 21 stakeholder meetings in January 2012 and 6 more meetings for the fall of 2012. Additionally, the SCDE convened an Educator Evaluation Stakeholder Committee in June 2012 to offer input and review a set of proposed educator evaluation guidelines.

For the ESEA waiver extension, the SCDE hosted a statewide virtual meeting on Tuesday, December 10, 2013. Public comments were also accepted from December 13, 2013 – January 31, 2014. Stakeholder committee meetings, as well as public community stakeholder meetings will continue during implementation and extension of the ESEA waiver.

**15. What incentive will any teacher or school have to accept a student who is known to have academic or behavioral challenges?**

The value-added data component does not set uniform goals that every student must meet. The software used for this calculation is able to look at

past performance of the student, demographic factors, etc. to come up with a calculation of the expected growth of that student. So, a student with a history of academic or behavioral challenges would not have the same goals as a student who has consistently performed well.